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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 003048

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SUBJECT: JORDAN--STAFFDEL WAXMAN TO GOJ--ESF IS FOR IRAQIS

Classified By: Ambassador Stephen Beecroft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In her meeting with Minister for Planning and International Cooperation Suhair Ali, Kennedy Senior Foreign Policy Advisor, Sharon Waxman delivered a strong, polite signal that U.S. Congressional leadership were keen to see USG economic support funds (ESF) used to make progress in Jordan on three issues: vocational education, income generation, and legal status for Iraqi refugees. Minister Ali agreed to be transparent in the use of USG funds. To Waxman's suggestions that Iraqis needed access to the labor markets, the Minister replied with a list of Jordanian challenges, including increasing unemployment, troubled balance of payments and popular suspicion of Iraqi "guests." When pressed, the Minister told Waxman that Iraqi policy came from "high up" in the government, and suggested that the Ambassador take the questions up with the Prime Minister. End summary.

A MESSAGE FROM THE FRIENDS OF JORDAN--ESF IS FOR IRAQIS

¶2. (C) Kennedy Staffer Sharon Waxman, accompanied by USAID Director Knott, and Ambassador Beecroft, met with Suhair Ali and her staff on October 21. Waxman was direct but polite as she told the Minister that Senator Kennedy, a strong friend of Jordan's, wanted to see that USG funds for Iraqi refugees in Jordan directly improved the lives of the refugees. Waxman made it clear that programs that only tangentially benefited Iraqis would not satisfy the spirit of the Congressional intent that the USD 200 million in 2008 ESF funding directly aid Iraqi refugees in Jordan. She said the Embassy was on the line for a report to Congress to demonstrate how Iraqis directly benefited from the economic support funds Congress allocated to Jordan.

¶3. (C) Senator Kennedy, Waxman said, was interested in seeing Iraqis have access to vocational training in public schools, the right to pursue income generating activities to offset encroaching poverty, and a legal status that allowed them to seek employment and live openly and honestly in Jordan.

¶4. (C) Both Waxman and the Ambassador offered the Minister examples of temporary protected status policies from the U.S. experience to demonstrate possible solutions for Iraqis in Jordan. When the Minister asked Waxman what the U.S. was doing for Iraqis, the Ambassador responded that the USG has increased the pace of its resettlement program to bring more Iraqis to the United States where they enjoy full rights under U.S. law.

"STAND IN OUR SHOES--WE ARE DOING OUR BEST"

¶5. (C) In response to Waxman's statement, the Minister asked Waxman for empathy. She ran off a litany of Jordan's financial and social challenges that precluded a more forward leaning attitude toward Iraqis. On employment and income generation, the Minister offered that the GOJ "turned a blind eye," allowing Iraqis to work illegally in Jordan.

¶6. (C) The Minister asserted that Iraqis did have access to vocational training while in Jordan. (Note: Iraqis have access to vocational training in primary school. They do not have access to certificate programs at the secondary school

level. End note). Ali warned that the Jordanian people would not welcome Iraqis entering the labor market when local unemployment was high. (Note: Official statistics put employment at 12.9 percent. End Note.) The Ambassador countered that Jordanians accepted the employment of hundreds of thousands of third-country guest workers. Ali said the policy to deny Iraqis market access came from "very high" in the Government. She suggested the Ambassador take up Waxman's questions with the Prime Minister.

"WE WILL BE TRANSPARENT, BUT WE CANNOT DO THE IMPOSSIBLE"

17. (C) The Minister said that her government wanted to be transparent in the use of USG funding. Ali said that her government was doing the best it could to assist Iraqis. She said she was open to suggestions from the mission as to how they could improve their efforts. The Minister pointed out that she had agreed with USAID on a plan to monitor program activity and to ensure that the beneficiaries were recorded. Ali cautioned that the Iraqi population was dispersed among Jordanian communities. Ali said the Ministry could not target services at needy Iraqis without also serving needy Jordanians. She underscored the GOJ position that Iraqis were a burden on all Jordanian services and institutions and that funding Jordan was the best way to assist Iraqis.

Beecroft